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Report of the Economic and Social Council

Smoke-free United Nations premises

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report on smoke-free United Nations premises, prepared by the World Health Organization in consultation with the Department of Management at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions.**

* A/64/150.

** The report was received late from the World Health Organization.

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the present report is to inform the General Assembly about the implementation of resolution 63/8 on smoke-free United Nations premises, adopted on 3 November 2008.

2. On 27 July 2006, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2006/42, in which it recommended that the General Assembly consider the implementation of a complete ban on smoking at all United Nations indoor premises, at Headquarters as well as at regional and country offices throughout the United Nations system, and the implementation of a complete ban on sales of tobacco products at all United Nations premises. In July 2008, the Economic and Social Council, recalling resolution 2006/42, recommended that the General Assembly, at its sixty-third session, consider the recommendations set out in that resolution (decision 2008/231).

3. Following that recommendation the General Assembly, at its sixty-third session, unanimously adopted resolution 63/8, the operative part of which reads:

> *The General Assembly*,
>
> 1. *Decides* to implement a complete ban on smoking at United Nations Headquarters indoor premises and on sales of tobacco products at United Nations Headquarters premises;
>
> 2. *Recommends* the implementation of a complete ban on smoking at all United Nations indoor premises, including regional and country offices throughout the United Nations system, and the implementation of a complete ban on sales of tobacco products at all United Nations premises;
>
> 3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session a report on the measures for the implementation of the present resolution.

II. Implementation of the resolution

4. The Secretary-General is fully committed to implementing the resolution on smoke-free United Nations premises. It will be recalled that action on smoke-free United Nations premises was taken at many duty stations as early as 2003, consistent with the principles developed by the World Health Organization on tobacco control as well as applicable local laws. Regrettably, in the past, compliance with the smoking ban at United Nations premises has been uneven among duty stations and was found particularly wanting at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

5. Pursuant to resolution 63/8, the Secretary-General has put in place a comprehensive strategy for smoke-free United Nations premises that informs staff, delegations and visitors to United Nations offices of the complete smoking ban. Given past practice, special measures were designed to strengthen compliance at the United Nations Secretariat compound in New York, where responsibility for implementation rests with the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services. The Directors-General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna and the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions for Africa

Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia are responsible for the implementation of the smoking ban at their respective duty stations.

A. United Nations Headquarters

6. To date, the measures set out below have been taken in New York in implementation of resolution 63/8.

7. In November 2008, additional "No Smoking" signs were posted at the building entry points.

8. Effective 1 January 2009, the sale of tobacco products ceased at the premises of the United Nations Secretariat.

9. External smoking areas were set up in the South Courtyard (January 2009), the North Rose Garden (May 2009), both at level 1B of the Conference Building, and on the terrace of the North Delegates Lounge on the 2nd floor of the Secretariat building (July 2009). Additional signs were posted to provide directions from the Vienna Café and the Delegates Lounge to the nearest designated smoking area.

10. A comprehensive information campaign commenced in January 2009 to alert staff, delegations and visitors to the premises of the smoking ban. It benefited from the support of the World Health Organization and included:

- A series of articles on the internal website iSeek that is available at all duty stations and informed staff of the resolution and the health risks associated with smoking
- A memorandum addressed to all Heads of Department and Office that calls on senior management to actively support the implementation of the smoking ban
- A note verbale to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations that provided an update of the measures taken to implement resolution 63/8 and invited delegations to express interest in joining a group of "Friends of smoke-free United Nations premises"
- Posters and informational materials displayed at the Vienna Café and the Delegates Lounge that inform of the resolution and the health risks associated with smoking
- A press briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Management on 22 July 2009 that updated the media on progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

11. The Medical Service at Headquarters offers a six-week monitored smoking cessation programme with individual follow-up to all United Nations staff and members of delegations. The programme includes provision of nicotine patches, motivational advice, lung function testing, the measuring of blood carbon monoxide levels, and blood pressure monitoring.

12. In addition to ST/SGB/2003/9, which stipulated a no-smoking policy at United Nations Headquarters as early as 2003, an information circular was issued on 10 August 2009 on the no smoking policy at United Nations Headquarters premises (ST/IC/2009/29).

13. The above-mentioned measures will remain in place during the relocation of offices from the United Nations compound in implementation of the capital master plan and also apply to the temporary building that is being erected on the North Lawn.

B. Offices away from Headquarters and at regional commissions

14. The premises of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the ESCAP compound in Bangkok were declared smoke free, effective 12 May 2003. At the time, three partially sheltered smoking areas were designated outside of the buildings and the sale of tobacco products on the premises ceased.

15. The United Nations complex in Nairobi was declared smoke free in November 2004. At the time, several external smoking areas were designated. Information regarding smoking-related health risks is provided to staff. Tobacco products are available at a sales kiosk on the premises and at the commissary.

16. At the Palais des Nations in Geneva, a smoking ban was issued in April 2007. Further to resolution 63/8, the ban was extended to a designated section of the delegates' restaurant where smoking had earlier still been tolerated. The sale of tobacco products ceased in February 2009 in the Palais and all annex buildings. Staff members were informed of these measures by means of two information circulars. The Committee on Health and Safety at the Workplace has recently recommended that appropriate exterior sheltered areas for smokers should be built and the United Nations Office at Geneva is currently identifying funds for this activity. A smoking cessation programme is available at the Medical Service, which also disseminates information material on smoking-related health risks. Additional outreach activities are under consideration.

17. The premises of the Economic Commission for Western Asia in Beirut were declared smoke free as from 1 December 2008, when some remaining areas where smoking had been permitted, including the staff cafeteria, were reclassified as non-smoking areas and external smoking areas were designated. Information on the health-related risks of smoking, was distributed, and staff members were advised that the smoking ban will be strictly enforced and that non-compliance may trigger administrative action.

18. At the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, instructions on the implementation of resolution 63/8 were circulated early in 2009 and staff members were advised of the smoke cessation programme offered by the Medical Service. The Vienna International Centre was declared smoke free, and designated smoking areas were established outside the building and in specifically marked enclosed areas that are ventilated separately. While tobacco products are not sold in the public areas of the Vienna International Centre, they are available in the commissary, which is located in the basement of the building and is administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

19. The compound of the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa was declared smoke free early in 2009, and an information circular on the smoking ban was issued to the staff of all United Nations agencies sharing the premises. Additional "No Smoking" signs were placed in the buildings, and some external areas of the compound were informally designated as smoking areas. The United

Nations Health Care Centre is planning a non-smoking awareness campaign. As in 2008, a "non-smoking" day and an interactive debate on the subject will again be part of the programme, which it will also include blood pressure monitoring. Additional incentives for staff members to refrain from smoking are under consideration, together with outreach activities that warn of the health-related risks associated with smoking.

20. The premises of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago were declared smoke free in August 2009, and the remaining interior smoking area was to be closed at the end of the month. External smoking areas have been designated. Currently, a kiosk on the premises that is operated by an outside contractor still sells cigarettes. The bidding process for a new kiosk/gift shop is under way and, under the new terms of the contract, the sale of tobacco products will no longer be permitted. The Medical Service offers smoking cessation programmes, and a poster campaign is under way that aims to raise awareness of smoking-related health risks.

III. Conclusion

21. The Secretary-General has received positive feedback from representatives of Member States and staff members in support of the measures taken to create a smoke-free environment at the Organization. Many colleagues are willing to do their share and have offered to reach out to others and remind them of the ban. Senior United Nations officials have taken a personal interest in the implementation of the General Assembly resolution.

22. The Secretary-General is mindful, however, that additional rules and information can only create an enabling environment. It takes personal commitment and a sense of responsibility for oneself and the well-being of others to fully implement the resolution. It is in this spirit that the Secretary-General calls on all staff, delegations and visitors to the United Nations premises to respect their own health and that of others and refrain from smoking on the premises.